

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for enabling a user of a mail receptacle to remotely receive information relating to the content, if any, of such mail receptacle, the method comprising the steps of:
- 5 generating status information for the mail receptacle, the status information including information indicating whether the mail receptacle contains one or more mail items; storing the status information in a computer system; and
- 10 providing the status information to the user via the computer system, whereby the user can determine from a location spatially remote from the mail receptacle whether the mail receptacle contains the one or more mail items.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes generating information indicating the number of said one or more mail items delivered to the mail receptacle.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes generating information indicating the class of said one or more mail items.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes generating information indicating approximately when the one or more mail items will be delivered to the mail receptacle.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of permitting the user to identify the one or more mail items for which status information should be generated.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer system is connected in communication with a computer network and the

providing step includes permitting the user to receive the status information stored in the computer system through the
5 computer network.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the computer network is the World Wide Web.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the providing step includes sending electronic messages from the computer system to the user through the computer network.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of updating the status information when one or more mail items are delivered to the mail receptacle and notifying the user when the status information is updated.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes generating the status information using a detection device associated with the mail receptacle.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes manually inspecting the mail receptacle to determine whether it contains the one or more mail items and generating the status information based on the results of
5 the inspecting step.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the generating step includes recording status data in a portable computer device and the storing step includes transferring the recorded status data from the portable computer device to the
5 computer system.

13. A method for enabling mail receptacle users to remotely receive information relating to the contents, if any, of their mail receptacles, the method comprising the steps of:

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- generating status information for each of a plurality
5 of mail receptacles, each mail receptacle having at least
one user associated therewith, the status information for
each mail receptacle including information indicating
whether such mail receptacle contains one or more mail
items;
- 10 storing the status information for the plurality of
mail receptacles in a computer system; and
providing the status information for each mail
receptacle to its associated user via the computer system,
whereby each user can determine from a location spatially
15 remote from its associated mail receptacle whether such mail
receptacle contains the one or more mail items.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the computer system is
connected to a computer network and the providing step
includes providing the status information for each mail
receptacle to its associated user through the computer
5 network.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the computer network is
the World Wide Web.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the plurality of mail
receptacles include a first plurality of clustered mail
receptacles at a first location.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein the plurality of mail
receptacles include a second plurality of clustered mail
receptacles at a second location spatially remote from the
first location.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the generating step
includes generating, for each mail receptacle, information
selected from the group consisting of: information
indicating the number of said one or more mail items

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25. The computer system of claim 24 wherein the computer system is connected to a computer network and configured for permitting each mail receptacle user to access the status information for its associated mail receptacle through the
5 computer network.

26. The computer system of claim 25 wherein the computer network is the World Wide Web.

27. The computer system of claim 25 wherein the plurality of mail receptacles are clustered mail receptacles.

28. The computer system of claim 27 wherein the clustered mail receptacles are leased mail receptacles and the computer system is configured for sending billing notices for the leased mail receptacles to the associated users
5 through the computer network.

29. A method for enabling a user to remotely receive information relating to mail to be delivered to the user, the method comprising the steps of:

generating status information for the mail to be
5 delivered, the status information including information indicating the number of items;

storing the status information according to user in a computer system; and

providing to the user access to the status information
10 via the computer system, whereby the user can determine information about the mail to be delivered to the user.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein the generating step includes generating the status information as the mail to be delivered to the user is sorted.

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31. The method of claim 30 wherein the providing step includes sending the status information to the user via email.

32. The method of claim 1 wherein the generating step includes generating the status information at a point of process in a mail delivery system.

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